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U.S. Targets Sites Crucial To Weapons-Making

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The opening U.S. attack against **Iraq** yesterday involved more than 200 cruise missiles launched from ships in the Persian Gulf and scores of bombs dropped from aircraft flying from the carrier USS Enterprise against targets across the country, defense officials said.

With the strikes planned to last at least three days and possibly longer, officials said U.S. and British warplanes stationed in Persian Gulf states and B-52 bombers operating out of the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia would join the effort, which aims to pummel a broad range of targets critical to **Iraq's** weapons manufacturing and President Saddam Hussein's hold on power.

In launching the attacks, President **Clinton** crossed a threshold of substantial military action that he repeatedly had threatened in the face of Iraqi defiance of United Nations weapons inspections. But the bombardment, while considerably more than the pinprick strikes carried out occasionally since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, appeared designed as less than a conclusive blow against Saddam Hussein's rule.

Clinton and his senior national security aides signaled the measured nature of the operation by confining the objectives to degrading **Iraq's** ability to threaten its neighbors and to manufacture and deliver nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Absent in the administration's stated aims was any mention of using the bombing to remove Saddam Hussein from power or change the ruling apparatus in Baghdad.

Briefing reporters at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen declined to put a time limit on the operation. While acknowledging a U.S. concern about extending the strikes into the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins this weekend, Cohen suggested that the military action had no firm date for conclusion and would depend on the success of the bombing.

He also made clear that after its long history of failed pledges to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors, there was nothing **Iraq** could say at this point to cause the United States to halt the attack. "We intend to continue the mission until such time as we carry out our objectives," Cohen said.

Indicating the length of the operation would also depend on whether **Iraq** responds militarily, Cohen confirmed that U.S. officials are worried **Iraq** may attempt a retaliatory strike against Kuwait or Israel. He said this concern is shared by those countries, noting "the neighbors are on full alert."

The Pentagon leader added that **Iraq** has been warned specifically that any attack on Israel would bring "severe consequences."

According to U.S. intelligence sources, Saddam Hussein issued contingency instructions to his military commanders last week that targets in and around Baghdad were to be vigorously defended. Anticipating that principal communications networks would be cut off in an attack, the Iraqi leader also ordered troops in southern **Iraq** to attack Kuwait within 48 hours after the beginning of a U.S. assault, unless they receive other instructions from him, the sources reported.

The threat of an Iraqi response was a major consideration behind **Clinton's** decision to order **additional** forces to the gulf yesterday. Defense officials said several dozen more land-based combat aircraft, including F-117 stealth jets, will rush to the region, along with 2,700 Army troops that will join the 1,200 soldiers already in Kuwait. A second aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, already was due to join the USS Enterprise in the gulf by the weekend.

U.S. officials described the airstrikes as an attempt to do with military force what U.N. inspectors have tried to do since the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War: block **Iraq** from reviving its development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. But they noted that airstrikes are a blunt instrument compared with inspections and therefore less preferable.

They also acknowledged how little is known about where **Iraq** may still be harboring proscribed weapons.

"There are difficult targets to find," Cohen said. "But we've indicated we will degrade his ability to threaten his neighbors, we will degrade his ability to deliver those weapons, and we will strike some of those facilities."

Another official said that despite the difficulty, a number of significant targets related to **Iraq's** biological and chemical weapons production have been identified.

"We realize we probably can't be 100 percent successful," the official said. "I hope our expectations are not out of proportion to what we can do."

Unable to find all the equipment or seed stocks that **Iraq** would use to rebuild its chemical and biological arsenal, the airstrikes likely would concentrate on delivery systems, defense officials said. That suggests hitting **Iraq's** remaining Mirage, Tupolev and MiG warplanes and the airfields that support them, as well as stocks of short-range missiles and manufacturing facilities associated with missile components.

Military planners also have indicated an interest in going after some of the security apparatus Saddam Hussein relies on to maintain control. This would include headquarters of a half-dozen special security and intelligence services as well as the Special Republican Guard whose mission is to protect the Iraqi leader.

The potential for civilian casualties was a major factor in shaping the strike plan, with military planners listing projected numbers of civilian deaths next to each proposed target and the Pentagon's top leaders reluctant to recommend attacking sites that could result in a high civilian toll, defense officials said.

Nevertheless, Pentagon officials have warned policymakers that Iraqi casualties, military and civilian, could run into the thousands.

One of the biggest challenges for those picking targets was deciding among commercial and industrial facilities whose equipment could be diverted to activities related to weapons of mass destruction. Many of these were among the scores of sites -- including pharmaceutical and pesticide plants, breweries and food processing facilities -- that U.N. weapons inspectors sought to monitor with visits and camera surveillance.

In the first wave of strikes, officials said the target list included command-and-control centers for **Iraq's** integrated air defense system. These centers are spread out around the country, with the main headquarters in Baghdad.

"First you knock out the brains," said one high-ranking official, adding that the aim is to clear a safe path for a bigger strike using manned aircraft.

The attacks came in waves that lasted more than four hours, ceasing before daylight in **Iraq**. With daylight lulls allowing reconnaissance aircraft and satellites to survey the damage, officials said the airstrikes likely would resume after nightfall.

They said one of the difficulties in predicting when the operation might end is anticipating the time needed to acquire adequate damage assessments and conclude that targets have been hit sufficiently.

One senior military officer said that while the operation could be over in as little as three days, it could well last into Ramadan.

During their news conference, Cohen and Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered few details about the operation, dubbed "Desert Fox."

Pressed on whether the impending House impeachment vote played any role in the timing of the U.S. strike, both men strongly denied that it was a factor.

ROAD TO THE NEW PERSIAN GULF CAMPAIGN

After months of U.N. and U.S. efforts to pressure Iraqi President Saddam Hussein into complying with disarmament conditions imposed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United States and Britain began air attacks against Iraqi military targets. Only a month ago, the United States aborted bombing strikes against **Iraq** when Saddam Hussein promised compliance. Since then, the reinforced U.S. military force in the region had remained in place and ready to strike. At the heart of the conflict is the fact that U.N. arms inspectors believe Saddam Hussein continues to hide some weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi regime has insisted that it already has complied with U.N. demands and that economic sanctions must be lifted. After **Iraq** invited U.N. inspectors back following the November crisis, the U.N. reported on Tuesday that Baghdad still was hindering the U.N. teams' work.

U.S.-IRAQI CONFRONTATIONS SINCE 1991 GULF WAR

1991

March: Shiite Muslims in southern **Iraq** rebel and are quickly defeated by the elite Iraqi **National Guard**.

Kurdish minority launches insurrection but is also crushed. The United States, Britain and France establish a "safe haven" for the Kurds north of the 36th parallel, an area from which Iraqi planes are banned.

1992

August: **Iraq** launches renewed air attacks on southern Shiite Muslims, prompting the U.N. to establish a "no-fly" zone along the 32nd parallel. United States and some allies later begin air patrols, which continue today.

December: Iraqi MiG-25 violates no-fly zone; U.S. plane shoots down plane.

1993

January: Baghdad refuses to remove missiles that the United States says it has moved into southern **Iraq**. Allied warplanes and warships attack missile sites and a nuclear facility near Baghdad.

June: United States says it discovered a plot to assassinate former President Bush during a visit to Kuwait; U.S. warships fire 24 cruise missiles at intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in retaliation. By Iraqi count, eight die.

1994

October: Iraqi troops move toward Kuwait, then pull back when the United States dispatches carrier group, 54,000 troops and warplanes.

1996

August: Saddam Hussein sends forces into northern **Iraq**, capturing Irbil, a key city inside the Kurdish safe haven protected by U.S.-led forces.

September: U.S. ships and airplanes fire scores of cruise missiles at military targets to punish the Iraqi military and discourage loyalty to Saddam Hussein. President **Clinton** extends the southern no-fly zone to just south of Baghdad.

1997

October: **Iraq** expels all Americans with the U.N. inspection teams, accusing them of spying, after the U.N. Security Council threatens new economic sanctions if **Iraq** does not cooperate.

November: **Iraq** ejects six remaining American arms inspectors; U.N. withdraws other inspectors in protest. After U.S. and Britain begin military buildup in Gulf, **Iraq** readmits inspectors, including Americans. Later that month, **Iraq** announces it will exclude from inspection sites "palaces and official residences." U.N. officials have suspected for two years that such sites were being used to conceal illicit items.

1998

February: U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan brokers deal with **Iraq**, defusing crisis by promising efforts to remove sanctions.

August: **Iraq** announces it is cutting ties with weapons inspectors, saying it sees no move toward lifting sanctions.

Oct. 31: **Iraq** cuts off work by U.N. monitors. U.S. and Britain warn of possible military strikes to force Iraqi compliance.

Nov. 5: Security Council condemns Iraqi actions as "flagrant violation."

Nov. 11: U.N. withdraws much of staff.

Nov. 14: U.S. launches, then recalls B-52 bombers on mission to attack **Iraq** after Saddam Hussein welcomes back monitors; they return a few days later.

Dec. 8: Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler reports that **Iraq** is still impeding inspections; U.N. teams depart.

U.S. FORCE IN REGION

The United States has 24,100 military personnel, 22 Navy ships, (eight carrying long-range Tomahawk

missiles) and 201 military aircraft in the Persian Gulf region.

U.S. ARMY

2,400 troops, half of them in Kuwait

U.S. AIR FORCE

In Kuwait:

Airplanes:

F-16 12

F-16CG 10

A-10 13

C-130E 2

Helicopters:

H60G 3

In Saudi Arabia:

Airplanes:

F-15C 18

F-16CJ 8

U-2 2

E-3 3

RC-135 2

KC-135 8

C-130E 2

In Oman:

B-1 bombers 4

In Diego Garcia:

B-52 bombers 15

KC-10 10

U.S. NAVY

Aircraft carrier battle group

USS Enterprise with: 10 F-14 Tomcats; 36 F/A-18 Hornets; 4 EA-6B Prowlers; 4 E-2C Hawkeyes; 8 S-3A/B Vikings; 3 SH-60F; 3 HH-60HH Seahawks

Missile cruiser

USS Gettysburg*

Destroyers

USS Paul Hamilton*, USS Hopper*, USS Stout*, USS Fletcher*, USS Hayler*, USS Nicholson*

Guided missile frigate

USS Carr

Attack submarine

USS Miami*

*Equipped with Tomahawk launchers

Amphibious assault ship

USS Belleau Wood with 29 planes

Amphibious transport dock USS Dubuque; dock landing ship USS Germantown; mine countermeasure ships USS Ardent and USS Dextrous

Moving toward the Arabian Gulf:

Aircraft carrier battle group USS Carl Vinson, projected to arrive Dec. 20; and the amphibious ready group USS Boxer

BRITISH FORCE IN THE REGION

Ships:

1 frigate, 1 support ship

Planes:

12 Tornado fighters in Kuwait; 6 Tornado reconnaissance planes in Saudi Arabia and 2 refuelers in Bahrain; other planes standing by in Turkey.

TOMAHAWK CRUISE MISSILE

One of the Pentagon's favored weapons, the Tomahawk can be launched from the air or from Navy ships. It carries a conventional high explosive warhead.

IRAQ'S PRINCIPAL MILITARY SITES

U.S. warplanes could strike any of the sites where weapons inspectors suspect **Iraq** has concealed illicit arsenals. But Iraqi air bases, air defense units, army bases or other military installations could also be targeted.

SOURCES: Wire and staff reports, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Reuters

At the Pentagon, Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefs reporters on the launching of cruise missiles against **Iraq**. At left is Defense Secretary William S. Cohen. An Iraqi man, reported by authorities as a civilian injured in the predawn bombardment of **Iraq**, is treated at Baghdad's Yarmouk Hospital. F-15 Eagle

PH,,JAMES M. THRESHER; PH,,REUTER/REINHARD KRAUSE ig,,louis spirito, robert dorrell, dita smith and lon tweeten; Illustration; Photo, IRAQI NEWS AGENCY RELEASED BY afp

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